

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 096538 TOSEC 040042
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TAGS: SOPN, OVIP (VANCE)

SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT NEW YORK TIMES BY-LINER FRIDAY APRIL 14 HEADED "SOVIET SAID TO WEIGH CUBA ROLE IN RHODESIA."
 2. MOSCOW, APRIL 13--WESTERN DIPLOMATS HERE BELIEVE THE SOVIET UNION IS TALKING WITH CUBA AND ITS AFRICAN ALLIES IN ETHIOPIA AND ANGOLA ABOUT STEPPING UP SUPPORT FOR BLACK RHODESIAN GUERRILLAS.
 3. AT LEAST 37,000 CUBAN TROOPS AND ADVISERS ARE NOW IN AFRICA, ACCORDING TO AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATES--20,000 IN ANGOLA, WHERE THEY HELPED AGOSTINHO NETO FIGHT HIS WAY TO POWER IN 1976, AND 17,000 IN ETHIOPIA WHERE THEY HELPED LIEUT. COL. MENGISTU HAILE MARIAM'S MILITARY REGIME DRIVE
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PAGE 02 STATE 096538 TOSEC 040042

OUT AN INVADING SOMALI FORCE.

4. COLONEL MENGISTU VISITED THE KREMLIN APRIL 3-5, BUT HIS STAY WAS KEPT SECRET UNTIL AFTER HE LEFT. MR. NETO HAS BEEN IN THE SOVIET UNION FOR MEDICAL AND PERHAPS OFFICIAL REASONS SINCE MARCH 20, BUT THE RUSSIANS HAVE NOT YET REPORTED HIS PRESENCE HERE.

5. NOW THE CUBAN FOREIGN MINISTER, ISIDORO M. PEOLI, IS EXPECTED IN MOSCOW LATER THIS MONTH. THE ROLE OF THE CUBAN FORCE IN ETHIOPIA, WHICH HAS GROWN FROM 12,000 MEN TO 17,000 SINCE THE SOMALI WITHDRAWAL A MONTH AGO, IS THOUGHT TO BE AN ISSUE OF DISCUSSION.

6. THE SOVIET AND CUBAN MILITARY PRESENCE--THERE ARE ABOUT A THOUSAND SOVIET MILITARY ADVISERS IN ETHIOPIA--HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE RECENT DECLINE IN SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS. THE SOVIET UNION REPORTEDLY GAVE THE UNITED STATES PRIVATE ASSURANCES THAT THE CUBAN TROOPS WOULD BE WITHDRAWN AFTER THE FIGHTING STOPPED.

7. THE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF CUBANS IN THE AREA SINCE THE FIGHTING ENDED HAS LED THE SOVIET UNION TO BE MORE "AMBIGUOUS" ABOUT THEIR FUTURE ROLE, ACCORDING TO ONE WESTERN SOURCE. THE CUBANS MAY BE USED, WESTERN DIPLOMATS NOW BELIEVE, TO HELP THE ETHIOPIANS CRUSH AN ARMED REBELLION BY LARGELY MOSLEM SECESSIONIST FORCES IN THE RUGGED MOUNTAINS OF ERITREA.

8. BUT THE MOST URGENT FEAR OF EXPERIENCED WESTERN OBSERVERS OF SOVIET-AFRICAN RELATIONS HERE IS THAT THE RUSSIANS AND THE CUBANS MIGHT MOVE TOWARDS MAJOR MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN RHODESIA UNLESS THE UNITED STATES AND

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 096538 TOSEC 040042

BRITAIN CAN ACHIEVE A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT THERE.

9. THE WHITE PRIME MINISTER OF RHODESIA, IAN D. SMITH, RECENTLY REACHED AGREEMENT WITH THREE MODERATE BLACK NATIONALIST GROUPS ON A TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT THAT GIVES THE BLACKS A SHARE OF POLITICAL POWER AND PROVIDES FOR MAJORITY RULE AT THE END OF THE YEAR. THE SOVIET-BACKED GUERRILLAS OPERATING FROM OUTSIDE RHODESIA'S BORDERS--THE PATRIOTIC FRONT--DENOUNCED THE SETTLEMENT AS A SHAM.

10. IN A JOINT COMMUNIQUE APRIL 7 AT THE END OF COLONEL MENGISTU'S VISIT, THE ETHIOPIANS AND THE RUSSIANS DESCRIBED THE SETTLEMENT IN RHODESIA AS A MANEUVER TO INSTALL A "PUPPET REGIME," AND EXPRESSED "FIRM AND UNSHAKABLE SUPPORT" FOR THE STRUGGLE OF THE PEOPLES OF RHODESIA, SOUTH-WEST AFRICA AND SOUTH AFRICA FOR "FREEDOM AND NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE."

11. WHETHER THIS MEANS THEY ALSO DISCUSSED SENDING CUBAN TROOPS FROM ETHIOPIA IS NOT CLEAR. BUT ANY REDEPLOYMENT WOULD ONLY MAKE SENSE IF MR. VANCE IS UNSUCCESSFUL IN PERSUADING ALL THE RHODESIAN FACTIONS TO SIT DOWN TOGETHER

UNDER BRITISH-AMERICAN LEADERSHIP AND WORK OUT A PLAN FOR MAJORITY RULE THAT INCLUDES ALL GROUPS.

12. SO FAR, SOVIET SUPPORT FOR THE GUERRILLA FORCES HAS BEEN LIMITED TO RIFLES, MACHINE GUNS, ROCKET LAUNCHERS AND LIGHT ANTI-AIRCRAFT MISSILES. MOST OF IT HAS GONE TO THE FACTION OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT LED BY JOSHUA NKOMO, WHO IS BASED IN ZAMBIA. THE OTHER FACTION, LED BY ROBERT MUGABE, IS BASED IN MOZAMBIQUE.

13. MR. VANCE IS COMING TO MOSCOW ON WEDNESDAY TO TALK ABOUT LIMITING STRATEGIC ARMS AS WELL AS ABOUT AFRICA ISSUES. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THE CUBAN FOREIGN MINISTER WILL BE HERE BEFORE OR AFTER THAT.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 STATE 096538 TOSEC 040042

14. WESTERN ANALYSTS BELIEVE MR. VANCE WILL HAVE A HARD TIME GETTING THE RUSSIANS TO NEGOTIATE ABOUT CUBAN AND SOVIET MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN AFRICA. "THEY'RE VERY TOUGH ON THAT," A DIPLOMAT SAID. "THEY SAY IT'S THE CONCERN OF THE CUBANS AND THE AFRICANS AND NOBODY ELSE'S BUSINESS. CHRISTOPHER

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